



# Reflections

## July 2018 – **AWARENESS OF THE SITUATION**

**C.S.** Lewis's final book, published three months after his death, was *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*. The book consists of a series of letters to a (fictional) close friend, and is subtitled: "Reflections on the Intimate Dialogue Between Man and God." One of the subjects he explores is how our prayers are affected by limitations in our knowledge of ourselves and of God. In the following excerpt from Letter 15, Lewis compares our situation to one in which the world is a stage and we are the actors:<sup>1</sup>

Now the moment of prayer is for me – or involves for me as its condition – the awareness, the reawakened awareness, that this "real world" and "real self" are very far from being rock-bottom realities. I cannot, in the flesh, leave the stage, either to go behind the scenes or to take my seat in the pit; but I can remember that these regions exist. And I also remember that my apparent self — this clown or hero or super — under his grease-paint is a real person with an offstage life. The dramatic person could not tread the stage unless he concealed a real person: unless the real and unknown I existed, I would not even make mistakes about the imagined me. And in prayer this real I struggles to speak, for once, from his real being, and to address, for once, not the other actors, but – what should I call Him? The Author, for He invented us all? The Producer, for He controls all? Or the Audience, for He watches, and will judge the performance?

The attempt is not to escape from space and time and from my creaturely situation as a subject facing objects. It is more modest: to re-awake the awareness of that situation. If that can be done, there is no need to go anywhere else. This situation itself is, at every moment, a possible theophany. Here is the holy ground; the Bush is burning now.

Of course this attempt may be attended with almost every degree of success or failure. The prayer preceding all prayers is "May it be the real I who speaks. May it be the real Thou that I speak to." Infinitely various are the levels from which we pray. Emotional intensity is in itself no proof of spiritual depth. If we pray in terror we shall pray earnestly; it only proves that terror is an earnest emotion. Only God Himself can let the bucket down to the depths in us. And, on the other side, He must constantly work as the iconoclast. Every idea of Him we form, He must in mercy shatter. The most blessed result of prayer would be to rise thinking "But I never knew before. I never dreamed..." I suppose it was at such a moment that Thomas Aquinas said of all his own theology, "It reminds me of straw."



Let us be thankful that, despite being finite and fallen human beings, we can know God because He has reveal Himself to us through Holy Scripture and in Jesus Christ. It is He who invites us to pray and to have a loving relationship with Him forever.

*"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."*

2 PETER 3:18 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt, 1992), pp. 81-82.